

# Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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## ★ **Big Tree.**

By Brian Selznick. Illus. by the author

Apr. 2023. 528p. Scholastic, \$32.99 (9781338180633). Gr. 3–7

Two sycamore-seed siblings, Merwin and Louise, nestle in their seed ball, waiting for the time that their dear mother tree has prepared them for, when they'll float free and set down roots of their own. Louise is eager to explore, and she's certain she's heard whispers from afar that the world needs her help, though exactly how is unclear. Their comfortable Cretaceous existence is upended when a vast fungal network brings news of impending danger and a run-in with a dinosaur sends the seeds flying much earlier than anticipated. They know it's imperative to find the perfect place to land—too little or too much of anything could prove disastrous. But to fulfill their destiny, they'll have to navigate a wide world filled with wonder and uncertainty. Initially conceived as a film idea that Steven Spielberg hoped Selznick would spin into a screenplay, the astonishing story is at once vast and intimate, succeeding as both a small-scale adventure story and a broader exploration of the natural world. Glorious pencil drawings, moving swiftly from macro to micro lenses, turn wispy seeds into spritely, darling protagonists, and wordless sketched reveals that follow text interludes are sure to elicit gasps of surprise and delight. Detailed endnotes explain the incredible science inspiring much of the story. An enthralling and expansive meditation on what it means to be alive on this planet.

— *Emily Graham*